

VZCZCXRO4667
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
DE RUEHDIR #0009/01 0641425
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 041425Z MAR 08
FM IRAN RPO DUBAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0229
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHDIR/IRAN RPO DUBAI PRIORITY 0222
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI PRIORITY 0203
RUEHAD/USDAO ABU DHABI TC
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 0171
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 IRAN RPO DUBAI 000009

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/4/2018
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: OPEN KIDNEY SALES IN IRAN

RPO DUBAI 00000009 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Jillian Burns, Director, Iran Regional Presence
Office, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (d)

1.(C) Summary: According to two Iranian doctors, kidney sales in the Islamic Republic of Iran are legal and regulated; others maintain sales of kidneys are not technically legal but widely tolerated. The practice is overseen by two NGOs, a foundation for kidney patients and a foundation for special diseases. The kidney providers and recipients connect either through these NGOs or link up personally through newspaper or posted-street advertisements, where the provider and recipient reach a deal and then consult a transplant center. Kidneys typically sell for 2-5 million tomans, approximately \$2-5000. According to the doctors, there is no excessive health risk to the donors -- as long as nothing goes wrong with their remaining kidney. End summary.

NGOs and transplant centers facilitate kidney sales and transplants

2.(C) Based on conversations with two Iranian doctors, an anesthesiologist and a forensic pathologist, kidney sales in Iran are legal and regulated. The practice is overseen by two NGOs, a foundation for kidney patients and a foundation for special diseases. According to these doctors, there is no excessive health risk to the donors -- as long as nothing goes wrong with their remaining kidney. Other doctors have said they did not believe the practice of selling kidneys was technically legal but that the practice was widespread.

3.(C) The anesthesiologist described the process in Iran of selling kidneys as uncomplicated: some donors and recipients contact the regulating centers that locate a match, organize compatibility tests, and arrange for the operation. Recipients often offer donors money after the transplant. Others seeking to sell their kidneys place an ad in a newspaper or other site explaining their physical condition such as sex, age, blood type, health, and lifestyle, providing a telephone number for potential buyers. If a deal is reached, the two parties consult a transplant center where they get evaluated, followed by the surgery. Both doctors claimed that the current rate for a kidney varies between 2-5 million tomans, or approximately \$2-5000.

4.(C) According to the forensic doctor, transplant doctors in major centers in large cities like Tehran, Esfahan, and Shiraz perform the surgery. He also said that each center has its own criteria and regulations for accepting transplant candidates; the center in Shiraz only accepts kidney transplants between relatives, but some other centers accept non-related donors and recipients.

5.(C) The doctors had no information on underground trade of kidneys outside Iran. According to a BBC article from October 31 2006, every year 1400 Iranians sell their kidneys on the international black market for organs, and medical agencies facilitate the trade.

Desperate kidney traders

6.(C) The two doctors acknowledged that financial pressure motivate most of the kidney sellers. The transplant doctor discussed the bitter realities behind most of these transactions, claiming that many of the sellers are young drug addicts with no hope for the future and others are just desperately poor. He said he had recently heard a rumored story of a man who sold a kidney to raise money for his daughter's dowry.

Religious concerns

7.(C) The forensic pathologist explained that the most common and successful organ transplants in Iran are that of corneas. He said Imam Khomeini approved cornea transplantation and preservation of corneas from human cadavers for use in Iran. The Imam's fatwa also allowed organ donation after death for humanitarian reasons, presumably both for scientific research and transplant. He said that despite Khomeini's fatwa, there is

RPO DUBAI 00000009 002.2 OF 002

a cultural objection to organ donation after death, mainly for fear of disrespect to the body as well as morality concerns that bodies would be exposed to the opposite sex. The doctor, who described himself as a religious man, said he does not know of anything in the Koran that bans transplant of organs. He said Islam requires one to save one's body from harm, which could be an argument against organ donation during life. (Note: Neither doctor questioned the practice of selling organs or addressed the religious view of selling organs. Endnote)

8.(C) On a related note, the forensic scientist wished that religious leaders would give a fatwa to reassure people regarding biopsies, as he faces similar morality concerns in his field of work. He called Khomeini progressive for endorsing the medical use of autopsies and organs for medical studies that would help human beings. He wished this would go a step farther to encourage organ donations, negating the taboo of autopsies; however, he said, the current leader is no Khomeini and would never do such a thing. He said currently Iranian medical school import bodies of non-Iranian and non-Moslems, mainly from India, for medical schools. He said some judges are currently claiming that the body of each Moslem is the property of their families or the property of their town mayor.

BURNS